



PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST POLICY

Policy Number: PRO-001
Effective Date: May 1, 2013
Review period: Annually
Last Revised: May 1, 2013

Purpose

This policy defines the ways in which the County fulfills public records requests received under RCW 42.56 and SCC 2.51. County courts are covered under separate rules and standards, and are generally exempt from this policy.

Background

The County's public records, both hardcopy and electronic, are subject to disclosure and production under the Public Records Act (PRA), Chapter 42.56 RCW. There are specific deadlines for responding to PRA requests and for producing responsive records established by the PRA. The County is subject to daily penalties and the payment of attorney fees and costs for failing to comply with the requirements of the PRA. The County's goal is to ensure compliance with the requirements of the PRA while minimizing the impact of these requests on the delivery of other services to the citizens of Snohomish County.

Scope

This policy covers public records requests for public records prepared, owned, used, or retained by any department or office of Snohomish County government, excluding the Snohomish County Courts. Any public records kept in electronic or hardcopy format are subject to production under the PRA, unless the record or its contents are defined as exempt by the PRA or other applicable law.

Authority

Authority is derived from [Revised Code of Washington 42.56](#) and from [Snohomish County Code 2.51](#).

Definitions

Public Records means all records prepared, owned, used, or retained by any department or office of Snohomish County government, excluding the Snohomish County Courts. This includes both hardcopy and electronic records.

Public Records Requests refers to requests submitted by persons or entities for Snohomish County's public records. Specific information may be exempt from production under the Public



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Records Act, Chapter 42.56 RCW. As a result, the response process includes a review to ensure that exempt information is identified and redacted or withheld from production.

The Public Records Officer is identified and the duties are as outlined in Snohomish County Code 2.51.035.

Public Records Specialists are appointed and the duties are as outlined in Snohomish County Code 2.51.040.

Employee means any person who works for Snohomish County, as a paid employee, volunteer, or contractor. Every employee is responsible for maintaining their files and records to comply with both the PRA and the applicable records retention schedules. For Public Records Requests, employees must:

1. Search for records within their area of responsibility, for records responsive to public records requests, upon request of the their department or office's Public Records Specialist;
2. Respond to requests to search for records in a timely manner, in accordance with timelines established by the Public Records Officer or appropriate Public Records Specialist; and
3. Track and report to their assigned Public Records Specialist the staff time expended in searching for and responding to requests for public records. This includes the time spent in determining whether exempt information exists in the records which have been requested.

Policy

All records prepared, owned, used, or retained by the County are subject to production under the PRA, regardless of which office or department originated or manages the record. The sole organizational exception is for records controlled by the Snohomish County Courts, which for these purposes is considered a part of the Washington State Court system. Exemptions related to the types of information which do not have to be disclosed are contained in the PRA and other applicable laws. For additional information, refer to the Public Disclosure Committee SharePoint page.

Accepting Requests

All formal public records requests shall be submitted in accordance with SCC 2.51.050. Informal public records requests may be made in accordance with SCC 2.51.060.



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Tools and Applications to assist in complying with requests

The County provides an enterprise Public Records Requests Tracking application which will be used by all offices and departments for the tracking of public records requests.

Reporting

The Public Records Officer will provide an annual report to county elected officials and the County Council on County Public Records Requests activity. Quarterly updates will be provided to the County Council.

Document delivery

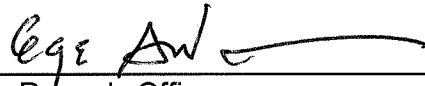
Copies of requested public records delivered to a requestor will be stored in a secured location, assigned to each County department or office, and logged under the Public Records Request number. Electronic copies of both the pre-redaction and post-redaction public records will be retained by the County.

A standard fee will be charged for delivery of records, according to the type of document and method of delivery, in accordance with the PRA.

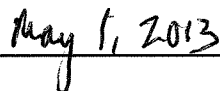
Time Tracking Requirement

The County requires that the time spent in compliance with producing records under the PRA be tracked and reported. Each department or office shall track in the County's Public Records Requests Tracking application the time spent on locating and gathering records in response to a request, as well as the time spent in reviewing and redacting exempt information. In addition, departments must count - or reasonably estimate the volume of - records (measured in pages) which are produced in response to a PRA request and log that information in the County's Public Records Requests Tracking application.

Approved by: _____


Public Records Officer

Date


May 1, 2013